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Donovan Promises Fascinating Story

A Mystery Mission for Mindszenty?

By Barrett McGurn
Of The Herald Tribune Staff

James B. Donovan, the lawyer who has worked minor miracles in freeing Communist-held prisoners, returned from Yugoslavia and the Vatican yesterday after a new venture of the same kind. He said that when the full story comes out "in due time" that "I think you'll find it fascinating."

Speculation spread immediately that the object of Mr. Donovan's efforts may be Josef Cardinal Mindszenty, who has been a voluntary inmate of the American legation in Budapest for seven-and-a-half years. But Mr. Donovan insisted that it was not "opportune" for him to say anything about his work at this time, beyond the fact

that the trip to Yugoslavia made "very great progress" in his new case.

Mr. Donovan, the court-appointed defender of the Soviet spy, Col. Rudolf Abel, was the negotiator who freed U-2 pilot Francis Powers, and the 9,700 Bay of Pigs captives. A lawyer, he is president of the New York City Board of Education. Msgr. Bela Varga, the last president of a free Hungarian parliament, who has been in continued close touch with political and religious conditions in Hungary, said that Marshal Josip Broz-Tito of Yugoslavia could be a useful intermediary in negotiating

the release of the Hungarian primate. The regime of Premier Janos Kadar is seeking international respectability and sees Communist but non-Soviet Yugoslavia as the most likely starting point. Tito, for his part, is indebted to the United States for much material aid and would enjoy increased prestige both with his own Catholic minority and with the Communist world in general if he could pluck the poisoned arrow of the Mindszenty case from the side of the Budapest regime.

However, Mr. Donovan, in answer to a direct question, denied speaking to Pope Paul

VI about Cardinal Mindszenty.

Cardinal Mindszenty is ready to take a communist safe-conduct out of Hungary if he gets a flat order from Pope Paul VI to go, Monsignor Vagra pointed out. Short of that the cardinal has demanded that the Kadar regime give the Catholic Church freedom of operation and permit the consecration of new bishops, neither of which the Budapest government has been willing to concede.

Mr. Donovan was in Europe 10 days. The last person with whom he conferred was the pope last Wednesday.

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Donovan Has New Swap Idea

Attorney James B. Donovan said yesterday on his return from Europe that he had discussed with Pope Paul a "fascinating" new plan to free political prisoners from behind the Iron Curtain.

Donovan, who arranged the exchange of U-2 pilot Gary Powers from Russia and the release of the Bay of Pigs prisoners from Cuba, arrived on the liner Queen Elizabeth.

Of his plan he said: "When this comes out it will be fascinating."